











# FIERY ANGEL

THE STORY OF

**Florence Nightingale**

*by*

**RAMONA  
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BARTH**

DRAWINGS BY  
**BETTY GRAHAM**



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# Preface

## THE BIRTH OF MODERN NURSING

*I WOULD LIKE to have everyone read this story of Florence Nightingale. I'd like them to know that within the lifetime of many living now, there was no school of scientific nursing in the world. Millions of men died who might have lived had there been proper hospital and nursing care.*

*I am sure that the conditions in Crimea duplicated those of every large and bloody war until the coming of Florence Nightingale. But those conditions had never been adequately described before. It was because of what Florence Nightingale did that publicity was given to the facts as they were.*

*In 1860 the first school for teaching scientific nursing was established as the result of her agitation. During my lifetime every nation has set up such schools and now every army has some nurses to care for their sick and wounded. Certainly this elaborate care of men in the armies today shows a marvelous evolution.*

*War has become more terrible than ever before, but nursing has evolved with it and this last great thing the author has shown in this book. Those who read it will be grateful for the blessed enlightenment it sheds. They will certainly agree that Florence Nightingale was one of the greatest of the great.*

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT



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DEDICATED TO OUR  
*“Women in White”*  
WHO FIGHT THE BATTLE  
OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN  
THE WORLD OVER

+

▪



## I. A Victorian Daughter Revolts

"**D**R. HOWE," Florence asked the distinguished American abolitionist, "you have had much experience in the world of Philanthropy. You are a ~~medical~~ man and a gentleman; now may I ask you to tell me, upon your word, whether it would be ~~unfitting~~ unsuitable or unbecoming to a young ~~Englishwoman~~ woman, if she should devote herself to works of ~~charity~~ charity, in hospitals, and elsewhere, as the Catholic Sisters do?"

Samuel ~~Walker~~ Howe in 1844 was spending a few days at ~~the beautiful~~ Nightingale home at Embly Park. He ~~had a ready~~ answer to this question asked him one ~~morning~~ before the family breakfast.

"My ~~dear Florence~~ Florence, it would be unusual and in England ~~unusual~~ is unusual is apt to be thought unsuitable. ~~My~~ I say to you, go forward, if you have a vocation ~~that~~ way of life; act up to your inspiration. ~~You~~ You will find that there is neither anything ~~unbecoming~~ or unladylike in doing your duty for ~~the~~ of others. Choose your path, go

on with it, wherever it may lead you. and God be with you."

One year later Florence Nightingale was to shock her family by telling them she was going to become a nurse.

Florence had chosen a strange course for "the Squire's daughter." All the usual pressures worked toward making her a "perfect lady" and a cultured benefactress. Her father was a country gentleman; her mother and elder sister Parthe were happily enmeshed in the cloistered world of British aristocracy.

The wealthy Nightingales were among "the best people" of the country. Tours on the continent were part of their yearly routine. Life was, in general, a social whirl.

Of Florence's personal appearance at the age of 24, at the time of her meeting with Dr. Howe, Mrs. Gaskell, the author, says: "She is tall; very straight and willowy in figure; thick and shortish red brown hair; very delicate complexion, grey eyes which are generally pensive and drooping, but when they choose can be the merriest eyes I ever saw; and perfect teeth, making her smile the sweetest I ever saw." In the Ward Howe wrote in her *Reminiscences*, "She was rather elegant than beautiful; she was very graceful of figure, her countenance most impressive, her conversation most interesting."

The life to which Florence Nightingale was born

had much fascination for her. There was stimulation in Madame Mohl's salon in Paris. She was thrilled by the perfection of Michelangelo and other great masters; she made elaborate notes on the operas and the performers. In the words of her most noted biographer, Sir Edward Cook, "She lived in some sort, the life of a caged bird. The cage, however, was pleasantly gilded. Florence was not always insensible of the gilding; there were times when she was tempted to chafe no longer at its bars, and to accept a life restricted within conventional lines."

But the contrast between the luxury of her own life and the wretchedness and squalor produced by the factory system of 19th century England struck her more forcibly with each year. A sense of uselessness made her question her role. Was the life of high society enough? Sensitive, morbid, she suffered fits of melancholy. She became "a difficult child." An adept at self-flagellation, she convinced herself that she was ruining her life.

The unending company at her country home annoyed her. Pouring out her feelings in her diary, she wrote:

"The next three weeks you will have company; then a fortnight alone; then a few weeks of London; then Embly; then perhaps go abroad; then three months of company at Lea Hurst; next the same round of Embly Company . . . People talk of London

gaities, but there you can at least have your mornings to yourself; since we have come home in September, do you think we have been alone? Not one fortnight. A country house is the real place for dissipation . . . Sometimes I think that everybody is hard upon me, that to be forever expected to be looking merry and saying something lively is more than can be asked mornings, noons and nights." She writes of going "dowaging to dinner with papa," of sitting home and watching the clock "till it was ten, when she could escape to her room." In her journal she cries: "My God, what is to become of me? . . . O weary day, O evenings that seem never to end! For how many long years I have watched that drawing room clock and thought it would never reach ten! And for 20 or 30 more, to do this . . . piling up miscellaneous instruction for one's self, the most unsatisfactory of all pursuits."

Unsuccessfully she tried to absorb herself in house-keeping, writing to her dear friend, Madame Mohl, "I am up to my chin in linen and glass. In this too-highly educated, too-little-active age it at least is a practical application of our theories to something,—and yet, in the middle of my lists, my green lists, brown lists, red lists, of all my instruments of the ornamental in culinary accomplishments which I cannot even divine the use of, I cannot help asking in my head, Can reasonable people want all this? Is all

that china, linen, glass necessary to make man a progressive animal?"

She rebelled at reading to her father, insisting that "to be read aloud to is the most miserable exercise of the human intellect. It is like lying on one's back, with one's hands tied and having liquid poured down one's throat."

As her family urged her to cultivate her literary gifts she confides in her diary, "I had so much rather live than write—Writing is only a supplement for living . . . I think one's feelings waste themselves in words; they ought all to be distilled into actions, and into actions which bring results."

Her beautiful homes meant less and less to her. When Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor of modern times, wandered with her on the lawn in front of the Embly Mansion, Florence with a wave of her hand said to her guest, "Do you know what I think when I look at that row of windows? I think how I should turn it into a hospital and just how I should place the beds."

Within the limits of her mode of life, she tried to further what she knew was to be her life-work. While her companions talked about parties and beaus, she devoured, in secret, the reports and pamphlets of medical commissions, works on sanitation, and the history of hospitals. In London, she left her elegant Mayfair rooms whenever she could to visit work-

houses and reformatories. Her "little thieves of Westminster," the urchins with whom she worked, were the "greatest joy" of the season. During a foreign tour to Egypt she forsook the museums in Alexandria to study the work of the religious sisterhoods. Visiting Athens, the Parthenon by moonlight meant little to her in comparison with the inner workings of an orphanage.

But these sporadic attempts to study and to alleviate the human misery which preyed upon her mind were not enough. At the age of 25, she shocked the family by announcing her desire to go to Salisbury Hospital for several months as a nurse. After that she was going to set up, in a house of her own, in some nearby village, "A Protestant Sisterhood" where educated women might, without taking any vows, be of service, as were the Catholic nuns.

The reaction against her carefully planned project was violent. It was called an outlandish scheme! It was bad enough that a daughter in the Victorian age should question her traditional role; that she should assert her independence of thought and action; but to think of working in such a field as Florence suggested was considered preposterous.

There was a real basis for the family's horror. Nursing, as we know it, was non-existent in the middle of the last century. On the continent, the work was in the hands of devoted but, by our standards, in-

competent "Sisters of Charity." In England Dickens' Nurse, Sairey Gamp, a coarse, ignorant old hag, "who took a drink when she was so disposed," was the typical hired nurse of the time, whether for rich or poor.

A doctor referring to the nurses of a London hospital spoke of them as "all drunkards without exception; but two nurses whom the surgeon can trust to give the patients their medicines."

In 1870 in the Bellevue Hospital in New York an eminent physician wrote, "Some of the nursing was done by drunken prostitutes who were given the option of going to prison or to hospital service . . . they were often found in sleep under the beds of their dead patients whose liquor they had stolen."

Nursing was to Florence Nightingale, even then, "a noble calling." She declared: "The longer I live, the more I feel as if all my being was gradually drawing to one point." Her parents' refusal to share her dreams had a serious effect upon her emotional make-up. "It was as if I had wanted to be a kitchen-maid," she retorts. She carried on imaginary dialogues with her mother: "Why, my dear, you don't suppose that with my 'talents' and my 'European reputation' and my 'beautiful letters' and all that, I'm going to stay dangling about my mother's drawing room all my life! I shall go and look out for work, to be sure. You must look upon me as your son. I

should have cost you a great deal more if I had married or been a son. You must now consider me married or a son. You are willing to part with me married."

Her diaries and letters are full of her mental agony. For a period she could find no impulse for any kind of activity. She stayed in bed late, feeling she had nothing to wake for. "Oh, how am I to get through this day, to talk through all this day, is the thought of every morning . . . In my thirty-first year, I see nothing desirable but death."

But the moral urge from within proved stronger than the conventional drives from without. The same year in which she felt only her own death as her answer, she wrote: "I have been so long treated as a child and have so long allowed myself to be treated as a child." She told herself that though she might have been born with a silver spoon in her mouth, despite the hysterical tears of her mother, the socially correct example of her sister Parthe, the ostracism of "high" society, she would not spend her life polishing and displaying that spoon!

Her moods of conflict and depression resolved into iron-willed schemes to carry out her goal. At the age of 31, her decision was made. She announced firmly that she was going to Germany to start her training as a nurse.

The virtue of filial piety is so deeply entrenched

in society that the real relationship between Florence Nightingale and her parents has been generally suppressed. Our usual portrayal of her as a shining example for girls does not include her rebellion against her parents. No better indication of Victorian sentimentality is shown than contemporary newspaper accounts of her home-life. "Her happiest place is at home, in the center of a very large band of accomplished relatives, and in simplest obedience to her admiring parents." Time and convention have belied the real facts; for Florence's home life was one of frustration and unhappiness. From a close study of her real thoughts and feelings it is doubtful if she ever forgave her parents for their initial rebuff to her great and serious mission. She let ten years go by later in her life without once visiting Lea Hurst. When her family came to London she intimated to them she would prefer it, if they stay in some other hotel than hers. She referred to Aunt Mai, her father's sister, who sympathized with her purpose and who helped her in her work as her "true" mother.

Fortunately, parental repression was but a goad to Florence's hopes of nursing. The more her mother and father ridiculed her purpose, the more she glorified it. A less willful person might have yielded and acquiesced to their wishes.

Florence Nightingale, however we may "wish" she

were the product of loving, sympathetic, encouraging parents, became, in general, what she was, despite them. Mrs. Nightingale herself was later in life to tell Florence, "You would have done nothing in life, if you had not resisted me."

Kaiserswerth-on-the-Rhine, a German nursinghome, was to be the test of Florence's desire. Was the hard, rigorous life of a nurse really what she sought? Could a daughter of distinction fit into a life of drudgery? Could a fine lady make the transition from the gentility of high society to the routine of institutional life?

Florence's enthusiastic letters to her mother and Parthe, who were taking the health cure at the waters at Carlsbad, nearby, answered all doubts. She wrote them: "The world here fills my life with interest . . . Until yesterday I never had time to send my clothes to the wash. We have ten minutes for each of our meals, of which we have four. We get up at five, breakfast at quarter before six. The patients dine at eleven; the sisters at twelve. We drink tea (i.e., a drink made of ground rye) between two and three, and sup at seven . . . I find the deepest interest in everything here, and am so well in body and mind. This is life. Now I know what it is to love life and really I should be sorry now to leave life. I know you will be glad to hear this, dearest Mum. God has indeed made life rich in interest and blessings, and I wish for no other earth, no other world but this."

It was a far way from the tortured girl's plan of suicide to the newly integrated woman's zest for living. The depressive state which made it impossible for her to get up in the morning in her spacious, luxurious home had vanished; getting up at 5 a.m. was now one of her joys; she could find no meaning in her family's 2000 acre estate, but in the Spartan severity of the rough and humble institution at Kaiserswerth she found her purpose—and herself. Florence had found "life" in a scrub bucket and dirty floors, in meals acceptable only to a peasant. No phase of her work could diminish her joy.

At the completion of her course, her parents urged her to set up a little hospital of her own near Lea Hurst. Hopefully they wrote that they had a house all picked out; Squire Nightingale would pay for everything. Florence, they planned, could be near her family and help her mother entertain.

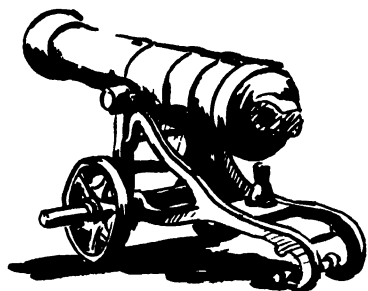
But something merely to dabble in was not for Florence's unflinching nature. Her parents' plan would mean a "playhouse institution." She tried to explain kindly why she could not do her best under such a set-up. Once again she refused to recognize that "Mother knows best." Nursing to Florence Nightingale was not a new toy.

The break with her parents was now complete. The narrow bonds of family life were severed.

She went to work with the Sisters of Charity in

Paris, after which she became the manager of the Harley Street Home for Sick Governesses in London, her first real job. The patients or "impatiens," as Florence called them, were all poor, friendless folk. She worked as hard as a day laborer. Squire Nightingale's daughter had refused to run true to type. The life of a fine lady had been forsaken for the whines and groans of the sickbed. Parthe might study art; she would study anatomy.

Florence Nightingale, like great saints before her, had made unbelievable renunciation. She forsook a way of life which had shielded her from grim reality. The frills, silks, satins and costly elegance which could have been hers were cast aside for the stiff, prim uniform of a nurse. She prayed "That the Lord would protect her from the desire to shine in society"; she wanted only to serve. But Florence Nightingale's background in culture, learning and grace could never leave her. She would remain to the end a Victorian lady—but a lady in revolt.



## **II. *The Eagle Tries Her Wings***

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE'S mother tried to explain her younger daughter's unconventional actions by an allusion to Andersen's Fairy Tales. With tears in her eyes, she told her intimates, "We are ducks who have hatched a wild swan." But as Lytton Strachey aptly notes, "The poor lady was wrong, it was not a swan that they had hatched; it was an eagle!"

Though popularly associated with the song-bird from which she received her name, Florence's character more closely resembles the mighty king of the birds. She was to soar to great heights in her chosen profession. Aunt Mai had told her, "If you will but be ready for it, something is getting ready for you." This prediction was to be realized with uncanny accuracy.

Florence had been but a year at Harley Street when the Crimean War broke out and England joined Turkey in her struggle against Russia. The whole

country in 1854 was stirred to its depths by the reports of the sufferings of the sick and wounded in the Crimea. Soldiers were dying by the thousands not only from battle, but from lack of hospital care. Disorganization reigned. Food and clothing had been sent to the desolate shores of the Crimea, but much of it failed to arrive. That which did reach its destination was stored in warehouses, but often "red tape" kept it from being used. The physicians needed medicine, the surgeons bandages.

William Howard Russell, war correspondent of the *London Times*, wrote back to England of the miseries surrounding the British soldiers: "It is now pouring rain, the skies are black as ink, the wind is howling over the staggering tents, the trenches are turned into dykes; in the tents the water is sometimes a foot deep; our men have not either warm or waterproof clothing; they are out for twelve hours at a time in the trenches; they are plunged into the inevitable miseries of a winter campaign—and not a soul seems to care for their comfort, or even for their lives. These are hard truths, but the people of England must hear them. They must know that the wretched beggar who wanders about the streets of London in the rain, leads the life of a prince compared with the British soldiers who are fighting out here for their country. . . . The commonest accessories of a hospital are wanting; there is not the least attention paid to

decency or clean linen; the stench is appalling; the fetid air can hardly struggle out to taint the atmosphere, save through the chinks in the walls and reefs; and for all I can observe, these men die without the least effort being made to save them. There they lie, just as they were let gently down on the ground by the poor fellows, their comrades, who brought them on their backs from the camp, with the greatest tenderness, but who are not allowed to remain with them. The sick appear to be tended by the sick, and the dying by the dying."

The snow, according to Russell, was three feet deep on a level, and the cold so intense that soldiers froze to death in their tents. At the outbreak of the war, the military authorities had not wanted female nurses, and so with the exception of a few untrained male orderlies, the English soldiers were left to "help" each other.

The situation grew worse with each successive battle. The famous and costly battle of Balaclava inspired Alfred Lord Tennyson to write "The Charge of the Light Brigade." As the wounded and dying poured into the already overflowing hospital at Scutari, the indignant correspondent Russell made a final plea: "Are there no devoted women amongst us, able and willing to go forth to the sick and suffering soldiers of the East? Are there none of the daughters of England, at this extreme hour of need,

ready for such a work of mercy? France has sent forth her Sisters of Mercy unsparingly, and they are even now by the bedsides of the wounded, and the dying, giving what woman's hand alone can give of comfort and relief. Must we fall so far below the French in self-sacrifice and devotedness, in a work which Christ so signally blesses as done unto Himself? 'I was sick and ye visited me!'"

Florence Nightingale's answer to this insistent trumpet call was to make world history. The time was ripe for someone trained and consecrated to nursing. Florence, 34 years of age, young yet mature, eager to serve, had the best available training of the day. When the crisis arose, a great woman was there equipped to do something about it.

Another happy coincidence was the political set-up in England. The head of Britain's War Department, Sidney Herbert, later Lord Herbert of Lea, was one of Florence's intimate friends. Herbert, "A man of the world, a brilliant member of society, a model country gentleman," was, like her, plagued by an inner sense of duty. During one of his many continental tours with his beautiful wife, he revealed his conflicts as he wrote, "The temptation to neglect public life becomes very strong when one is so happy in one's nest." But he did not succumb; in Rome he planned hospitals for convalescents and hired a cottage for the treatment of scrofulous children. Like

Florence, Sidney Herbert was more concerned with Italy's struggle for freedom than he was with the sybils and madonnas.

At the outbreak of the Crimean War, Herbert again enlisted her help. Florence was, in his opinion, the "one woman in England who was fitted by position, knowledge and training to organize a nursing staff and take them out to the aid of the suffering soldiers." His letter crossed in the mail with one to him from Florence, offering her services. The next day the War Office announced that Miss Nightingale had been appointed by the government to the office of Superintendent of Nurses at Scutari.

Herbert's recognition of Florence's executive ability made one of the milestones in the history of women. His faith in her ability to fill a public position in crisis was to inspire women of the future with assurance and courage. Well did Gladstone comment, "I wish that some one of the thousand who in prose justly celebrate Miss Nightingale would say a single word for the man of 'routine' who devised and projected her going—Sidney Herbert."

The governmental request for Florence's services was followed by a nation-wide uproar. "Who is Miss Nightingale?" the amazed people cried. The answers from the *Examiner* and the *Times* were many and varied; she was a young lady of singular endowments, both natural and acquired. She knew mathematics,

spoke French, German and Italian. She was about the age of their Queen; she was graceful, feminine, rich and popular; more relevant to the situation, she was, as the War Office announced, "a lady with greater practical experience of hospital administration and treatment than any other lady in the country."

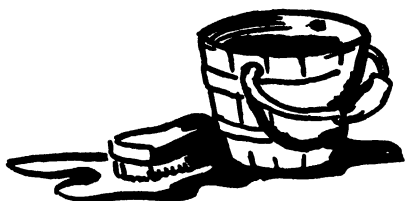
Florence, released as Superintendent of the Harley Street Hospital, was vested with the full authority and support of the British Government as Superintendent of Nurses for the Crimea. She faced many problems. How many nurses should she take with her? How could she overcome the intense feeling about the impropriety of the venture? The prevalent attitude was that it was nonsense for young ladies "to attempt to nurse soldiers when they did not even yet know what it was to nurse a baby."

Florence's name evoked varied responses: she was a feeble, delicate woman and would not survive a month; she was a headstrong, foolish woman; she must be a saint to undertake such a task. The verse-writers gave a humorous touch to the situation as they began to play upon her name. *Punch* printed a cartoon showing a hospital ward with the "Lady-birds" hovering about the sick men's cots, each bird having a nurse's head. The nightingale's beautiful notes, which sound like "jug, jug, jug," were inculcated in the popular verse, "The Nightingale's Song to the Sick Soldier":

*"Listen, soldier, to the tale of the tender nightingale,  
'Tis a charm that soon will ease your wounds so cruel,  
Singing medicine for your pain, in a sympathetic strain,  
With a jug, jug, jug of lemonade or gruel."*

The Queen of the Nightingales was spending her time during this commotion scouring all London for nurses. Sister Parthe wrote of her, "She is as calm and composed in this furious haste as if she were going for a walk."

In October, 1854, one week after her appointment, without fuss or feathers, she started for Constantinople. The thirty-eight nurses were well likened to the Apostles as, in the bitter discomforts of an ancient vessel, they set sail for a hard journey at sea. The "angelband," as Kinglake, the historian of the Crimea, called them, was on its way.



### **III. A Stubborn Samaritan**

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE'S life in the Crimea has well been described by one of her biographers in a chapter headed—HELL. The *London Times* correspondent had not exaggerated in his picture of the state of the wounded British Army.

She found not so much a hospital as a pest house. The rough, massive building, which was given the name of Barrack Hospital, lent to the English by the Turkish government, was originally intended for hardy, well soldiers. Of the cramped quarters given to Florence and her nurses, she writes, "Occasionally our roof is torn off, or the windows are blown in, and we are under water for the night." Sewers were of such shoddy construction that the winds blew the foul air up the pipe of open privies into the wards where the sick lay.

Florence was later to tell the Royal Commission of 1857, "The sanitary conditions of the hospitals of Scutari were inferior in point of crowding, ventilation, drainage, cleanliness, up to the middle of March,

1855, to any civil hospital, or to the poorest homes of the worst parts of the civil population of any large town that I have ever seen."

At the time, she wrote back home, "In the midst of this appalling horror (we are steeped up to our necks in blood) here is good, and I can truly say, like Saint Peter, it is good for us to be here—though I doubt if St. Peter had been here, he would have said so . . . I have been well acquainted with the dwellings of the worst parts of most of the great cities in Europe, but have never been in an atmosphere which I could compare with the Barrack Hospital at night." According to another first-hand description, "There were no vessels for water or utensils of any kind; no soap, towels or cloths, no hospital clothes; the men lying in their uniforms stiff with gore and covered with filth to a degree and of a kind no one could write about; their persons covered with vermin, which crawled about the floors and walls of the dreadful den of dirt, pestilence, and death to which they were consigned—the sheets were of canvas, and so coarse that the wounded men begged to be left in their blankets. It was indeed impossible to put men in such a state of emaciation into these sheets. There was no bedroom furniture of any kind, and only empty beer or wine bottles for candlesticks."

These were the conditions which faced the bleeding victims of the cruel war in the Crimea. First-aid

in the field of battle was then unknown. The soldiers often spent several days on shipboard between the scene of combat and Scutari, tortured by fever, thirst and hunger, with broken bones and undressed wounds. One of the nurses writes of "their thigh and shoulder bones perfectly red from rubbing against the deck." She continues, "How can I ever describe my first day in the hospital at Scutari. Vessels were arriving and orderlies carrying the poor fellows, who with their wounds and frost-bites had been tossing about on the Black Sea for two or three days and sometimes more. Where were they to go? Not an available bed. They were laid on the floor one after another, till the beds were emptied of those dying of cholera and every other disease. Many died immediately after being brought in—their moans would pierce the heart and the look of agony on those poor dying faces will never leave my heart. They may well be called 'the martyrs of the Crimea!'"

Another of Miss Nightingale's assistants writes, "This is a work which makes either angels or devils of men and of women, too. As for the assistants, they are all cubs, and will, while a man is breathing his last breath under the knife, lament the annoyance of being called up from their dinner by such a fresh influx of wounded . . . In all our corridor, I think we have not an average of three limbs per man . . . Then come the operations . . . They are all performed

in the wards . . . no time to move them; one poor fellow exhausted with hemorrhage, has his leg amputated as a last hope, and dies ten minutes after the surgeon has left, almost before the breath has left his body, it is sown up in its blanket, and carried away and buried the same day."

The patients, saturated with blood, lay on the floor with rats running over them; dead animals in every state of decay, refuse and filth from the outside polluted the air. There were no facilities for bathing; none for eating; "the men have to tear their meat like wild beasts," Florence writes. There was no kitchen, no knives, no forks, no spoons, no cooks. Food was unsystematically prepared in thirteen huge coppers by whoever was able. The rations were sometimes cooked only half an hour. Sometimes it was four hours before they were fished out. It took three or four hours to serve the dinner to the three and four miles of patients. There was no laundry. The clothes and bed-linen of the wounded men and of those with infectious diseases were all thrown together. The most common medical materials, splints, bandages, ordinary drugs were absent. Florence wrote that there were "no scissors for cutting the men's hair, which is literally alive, no basin, no towels, no chloride of zinc."

Florence Nightingale might have been sitting with her dogs before the great fireplace of Lea Hurst

writing checks for the work at Scutari; but she had chosen instead to remove blood-saturated shirts from dying soldiers, to wash wounds, to fight rats and dispose of them with her own hands.

Those who wished might stay at home and hem-stitch garments to send to "the poor soldiers." Her sister Parthe might appeal for funds at the fashionable, charitable Bureau in Cavendish Square. But Florence's philanthropy must be first-hand.

The Lady Superintendent found at Scutari not only filth and horror, but a complete collapse of morale among the medical authorities. The orderlies were unfeeling, ignorant and irresponsible. Administration at home and in Scutari was a sorry bungle. Kinglake's simple statement tells the whole story, "The sanitary administration had broken down."

*Punch* pictures a British soldier struggling for life as he lies entangled in the coils of a frightful serpent labelled "Red-Tape." It was a telling caricature of the situation. "It is a current joke here," Florence writes, "to offer a prize for the discovery of anyone willing to take responsibility."

Her arrival to remedy the situation brought only scorn and ridicule from the overwrought, inefficient officials in charge. They cracked jokes about her as "The Bird." What could a woman do in such a place? The military officers either threw obstacles in her path or lent her as little support as possible, sarcasti-

cally retorting, "It is the Bird's duty." But they did not realize the calibre of the pioneer in petticoats who had been sent to Scutari.

With exemplary patience, Florence overcame their hostility. The Lady Superintendent with tact, but strength, soon made her impact felt as she slowly but surely became administrator of the hospital.

"The Chief" seemed to operate in every department.

First she sent to England for 200 hard scrubbing brushes for the floors. "The vermin might," she wrote, "if they had but unity of purpose, carry off the four miles of beds on their backs and march with them into the War Office . . ." Florence demanded kitchen utensils; she asked for hair mattresses. She must have carpenters to patch up the dilapidated building. The men in the hospital must have towels and tooth-brushes; those who were fighting must have warm clothing.

She writes after one of her visits at the front, "Fancy working five nights out of seven in the trenches! Fancy being thirty-six hours in them at a stretch, often forty-eight hours with no food but raw salt pork, sprinkled with sugar, rum, and biscuit; . . . and fancy through all this the army, preserving their courage and patience as they have done, and being now eager to be led even into the trenches . . . When I see the camp, I wonder not that the army suffered so much, but that there is any army left at all."

From the hospital she writes caustically, "The state of the troops who return here is frost-bitten, semi-nude, starved, ragged. If the troops who work in the trenches are not supplied with warm clothing, Napoleon's Russian campaign will be repeated here."

Her fervid plea was answered.

British aristocrats and humble working women made bandages, shirts and socks; they turned their houses upside down to find what Miss Nightingale wanted. When one of the "sisters" sorted the goods that came to the wharves at Scutari, she said, "The English nobility must have emptied their wardrobes and linen stores, to send out bandages for the wounded. There was the most beautiful underclothing, and the finest cambric sheets, with merely a scissors run here and there through them, to insure their being used for no other purpose, some from the Queen's palace, with the royal monogram beautifully worked."

A representative of the *Times* came with a fund to build an English Church at Pera. Florence took him for a walk through the packed wards of the hospital and pointed to her men tossing in fever and delirium. The *Times* Fund went, not for a church, but for blankets and medicines. Florence received and distributed the consignments from home. "I am a kind of general dealer," she writes, "in socks, shirts, knives and forks, wooden spoons, tin pans, cabbage

and carrots, operating tables, towels and soap, small pillows."

She reorganized the kitchen. After ten days she had two "extra diet kitchens" for those who needed special food. The meat was boned, the gristle removed. Meals became punctual and well prepared. Soups, jellies, arrowroot mixed with port wine were discovered on special trays. She installed boilers in a Turkish house and organized a laundry. Special provision was made for the women who had come far from home to be near their husbands. Florence found the army wives, barefooted and bareheaded, living in three or four rooms in the basement of the hospital, their clothes worn out. Twenty-two babies were born in a cellar from November through December and many more during the winter. Florence helped feed and clothe some five hundred women and their babies.

When fever broke out, due to a broken drain, she found a nearby house, cleaned and furnished it and moved the women in. She sent widows back to England, employed the others and helped start a school for the children. In her later suggestions for army reform, she was to write, "When the improvements in our system which the war must suggest are discussed, let not the wife and child of the soldier be forgotten."

Her work extended from Scutari to the Crimea itself. She must, as Superintendent of Nurses, see how

the sick and wounded were faring in the actual seat of war. For weeks she rode on horseback over the bleak and rocky roads of the Crimea. It was a far cry from the pleasant canters of the Squire's daughter in the New Forest of beautiful England. No hardship or danger could sway her from her duties.

Approaching the walls of Sebastopol, one day, a sentry met the party and begged them to dismount. "Sharp firing going on here," he said, pointing to the fragments of shell lying about. "You'll attract attention, and they'll fire at you."

Miss Nightingale took temporary shelter behind a rock but soon went into the trenches themselves. The horrified sentry told her, "Madam, if anything happens, I call upon these gentlemen to witness that I did not fail to warn you of the danger."

"My good young man," she answered, "more dead and wounded have passed through my hands than I hope you will ever see in the battlefield during the whole of your military career; believe me, I have no fear of death."

Even the serious physical break-down she met in the Crimea could not stop her work. The rough and fatiguing rides under the pitiless sun finally took their toll on her weakened constitution. She had withstood daily contacts with cholera and typhoid fever at Scutari, but in her travels at the front she collapsed with what the doctors pronounced the

worst form of Crimean fever. News reached England that Florence Nightingale was dying. But it seemed that her incomparable self-discipline was dominant even on her deathbed. She had work to do; she must get better. The dreaded affliction passed. The doctors urged the convalescent to sail immediately for London. Florence refused. She would not desert her post. She insisted on being taken back to Scutari. Even when she was on a stretcher, her word was law. The eight soldiers who carried her down from the sanatorium on the mountainside to the port did as they were told.

Despite this ordeal, her work in the heart of the Crimea was not over. She came back to set up two new camp hospitals and to establish a staff of nurses. On the height above Balaclava, where "The Nightingale Cross" stands today in memoriam, she spent a second winter in the bitter cold. A victim of rheumatism, tortured by sciatica, yet the report of one person was, "I have seen Miss Nightingale stand for hours at the top of a bleak, rocky mountain near the hospital, giving her instructions while the snow was falling heavily." Her bed in the humble shack was often covered with snow. "Everything, even the ink," she wrote, "freezes in our hut every night." She rode at night down the perilous mountain roads that were rough and frozen, with no escort save the driver. Her carriage once turned over, injuring both herself and

the attendant nurse. But she stayed on, demanding order and comfort, not for herself, but for her soldiers. Even after the Treaty of Peace was signed, she refused to leave until all the hospitals were closed and the last troopship with the last sick man had gone.

Six months after her arrival at Scutari, the change was so great that Kinglake writes, "Had it been preceded by mummery, instead of ventilation and drainage and pure water supply, it would have passed for a miracle."

The death rate in the hospital despite cholera, typhus and dysentery, was reduced from 60 per cent to 1 per cent.

Florence had not only established a systematic, well organized hospital; she had at the same time done much for what she called "the education of the British Army."

With rare sociological grasp, she writes, "What the horrors of War are, no one can imagine. They are not wounds and blood and fever, spotted and low dysentery, chronic acute, and cold and heat and famine. They are intoxication, drunken brutality, demoralization, and disorder on the part of the inferior; jealousies, meanness, and indifference, selfish brutality on the part of the superior."

With the techniques of a 20th Century social worker, Florence worked to build up the men's morale. "Reading huts" were established where the men could

find their favorite English magazines and books, paper, pens, envelopes and stamps. Florence wrote to England for games, maps, music and books; she conducted study classes; a cafe was built at Inkerman where the soldiers could come in from the bitter cold for a cup of hot coffee or chocolate.

Money order offices sprang up in convenient spots so that the men might forward their pay home. "This money," Florence wrote, "was literally so much rescued from the canteen and drunkenness."

With proper incentives, the cynical officials at home could no longer say, "The British soldier is not a remitting animal."

In her work, Florence looked far beyond the immediate needs. Scarcely had she arrived from England than she wrote to Mr. Herbert of her hopes for the formation of a Medical School at Scutari. "We have lost the finest opportunity for advancing the cause of medicine and erecting it into a Science which will probably ever be afforded."

At the Barrack Hospital, in addition to her work as planner, executive and morale-builder, Florence Nightingale was a nurse. She cared for 18,000 sick and wounded. She passed eight hours at a time on her knees dressing wounds. As each new patient came in, she gave orders where the sufferer was to go, what doctor was to be summoned, what nurses would attend; but she herself was "at hand" for

emergency cases; she took her place regularly in the operating room, helping the surgeon and cheering the patient. "The magic of her power over men was felt in the room—the dreaded, the blood-stained room—where operations took place." Anesthetics were seldom used. But one of her male companions wrote of Miss Nightingale, "Her nerve is equal to her good sense; she, with one of the nurses and myself, gave efficient aid at an amputation of the thigh yesterday. She was just as cool as if she had to do it herself."

According to one of the chaplains, "She has an utter disregard of contagion. The more awful any particular case, the more certainly might her slight form be seen bending over him . . . seldom quitting his side till death released him."

The appreciation of the soldiers was well voiced by the man who wrote home, "We call her the Angel of the Crimea." "If the Queen came to die," another added, "they ought to make her Queen, and I think they would."

Florence Nightingale's ministering to the soldiers in the Barrack Hospital at Scutari was unprecedented. Her spectacular accomplishments there became known the world over. The poet Longfellow wrote:

*"Lo! in that house of misery  
A Lady with a lamp I see,  
Pass through the glimmering gloom,  
And flit from room to room."*

Longfellow's world-famous tribute is responsible for our proverbial picture of Florence Nightingale as a

self-sacrificing, saintly maiden; but the fact is that she was made more of dynamite than of sweetness and light. She was a stern, rather than a swooning heroine. As Lytton Strachey says, "In the real Miss Nightingale there was more that was interesting than the legendary one; there was also less that was agreeable."

A symbol of calm assurance midst the hell of Scutari, Florence was to the agonized soldiers (as Longfellow wrote) their only ray of hope. Well might "The speechless sufferers kiss her shadow" as she went down the long rows of cots listening to their breathing and noting their color. But to the military surgeons, the orderlies and the administrators, she seemed a dangerous, meddling person. She wrote with deep feeling of her wounded men. "There never came from any of them one word or one look which a gentleman would not have used; and while paying this humble tribute to humble courtesy, the tears come into my eyes as I think how amidst scenes of loathsome disease and death there arose above it all the innate dignity, gentleness and chivalry of the men (for never surely was chivalry so strikingly exemplified) shining in the midst of what must be considered as the lowest sinks of human misery, and preventing instinctively the use of one expression which could distress a gentlewoman."

It was a different language she used when she

wrote home to Sidney Herbert about the inefficiency of her co-workers. Sarcastically, vituperatively, she flayed those who she felt cared nothing for the sick. She lashed out against the lack of system and the evils of the personnel. "The Sister's Tower," her humble room, became the brain center of the Hospital. From there she wrote letters to the relatives of the men who had died, carefully relaying their last words. It was here, too, that she penned her confidential reports to Herbert in which she spared no one. From her pen the most highly respected British lords received terrible nicknames. One important individual she referred to as "a fossil of the pure Old Red Sandstone." When Sir John Hall, Inspector-General of the Hospitals in the East, was awarded the honor of a K.C.B., Florence wrote Herbert that he did not deserve it; Hall was responsible for the wreck of the army; the honor had turned his head; the distinguished letters in his case meant, according to Florence, "Knight of the Crimean Burial-Ground."

She referred to one of the Reverend Mothers at the Hospital as "Reverend Brickbat." Florence transformed the Barrack Hospital, not by smoothing pillows and administering gruel, but by constant battling with the authorities.

When the men arrived from battle with their clothes in tatters, the "Purveyor" stood inactive, insisting that "according to the rules and regulations"



soldiers should bring "an adequate supply of clothing with them to the hospital." No, he told Florence, he couldn't unpack 27,000 shirts which lay in the storehouses. It was impossible to act "without a board." The sick and wounded lay shivering for three weeks until the Board acted. The next time the situation arose, Florence ordered a government consignment to be forcibly opened.

"I must have these things," she is reported to have said quietly. "My men are dying from lack of them." The trembling under-official stammered with the fear of court-martial. "You shall have no blame," Florence told him. "I take the entire responsibility upon myself. Open the door!" This particular door was but one of many to be opened to her.

No obstacle was too formidable for the Lady-in-Chief. When, in the already overflowing hospital, a great new contingent was expected from the battlefields, she hired workmen to rehabilitate some of the rooms. Disapproving officials insisted that the proper course for such action was an appeal to the Director General of the Army Medical Department in London, who, in turn, would apply to the Horse Guard, who would move the Ordnance, who would take it up with the Treasury, who might consent to having the remodeling done in a few months—when the need was over. On her own, Miss Nightingale hired two hundred workmen, completed the building, and paid

the bill out of her own pocket. She devoted her entire personal allowance to her work in the East.

But Miss Nightingale was no wholesale spurner of rules; she insisted upon rigid discipline and respect for the regulations. One cold night, sitting by the bedside of a dying patient, she asked an orderly to bring a hot-water bottle. The orderly refused on the ground that he could do nothing for a patient without directions from a medical officer. Miss Nightingale herself found a doctor who could grant her request. In this case she was able to warm the icy feet of her patient — legally. Criticized for her strictness, she never lost sight, however, of her real goal, that of alleviating the suffering of her soldiers. When she had to choose between a rule or the comfort of a wounded man, there was never a question as to which it should be.

There was none of the hysterical female in Miss Nightingale, understandable though it would have been midst the horrors of Scutari. She fought hard, but mostly from her desk in the Sister's Towers. She never lost her temper in public. One of her companions said, "I never heard her raise her voice. She did not need to. When a doctor or orderly questioned any of her directions, saying 'It can't be done,' her answer was a quiet, insistent, 'But it must be done.' " "Beneath her cool and calm demeanor," wrote Strachey, "lurked fierce and passionate fires."

A sentimental writer of the era said of Miss Nightingale's lovely face: "The soul's glory shines through every feature so exultingly. Nothing can be sweeter than her smile. It is like a sunny day in summer." Conversely, nothing was more awesome than her frown. The small firm mouth we see in her portraits, with the tightly closed lips is more symbolic of Florence Nightingale's nature than the "sunny" Pollyanna smile. The "soul's glory" may have shone through her features, but the light in her steady, clear grey-blue eyes revealed a willful determination.

The objective of the Lady-in-Chief of the Crimea was fortunately not that of popularity. She wanted results and she got them. Much of her precious time and energy had to go to solve power and personality conflicts in the administration. She wrote, "There is not an official who would not burn me like Joan of Arc if he could." Florence had no persecution complex. She spoke the truth. Far from being the "most loved woman of her period," as our Sunday School texts declare, she was at the height of her great work, bitterly hated. When she and her nurses were inspecting the hospitals in the Crimea itself, Sir John Hall ordered that no rations of any kind be supplied her; he would literally starve her into submission. Florence wrote at the time, "During the greater part of the day I have been without food, except necessarily a little brandy and water." Her own foresight alone

saved her; she had brought enough food with her to feed herself and the twenty-four nurses during the ten-day trip.

Most of the conflicts were due to the fact that she was a woman. She got things done, but the military officers sulked; a female was usurping their power. She circumvented the red-tape and got supplies; they labelled her as officious. She had the meat boned; she fed the starving and clothed the naked; they said she was coddling the brutes with "preposterous luxuries." Life in Scutari was a constant struggle to retain her authority despite jealousy and piqued male egos.

Not only her sex, but her religion was used as a weapon against her. They were trying "to root her out of the Crimea," she wrote home, "due to sectarian differences." A similar complaint re-echoed from England. The great body of English people had only gratitude for her work, yet as she grappled with disease, suffering and death, a certain element of small-minded British society, far removed from the realities of war, attacked her on religious ground. The old bogeys that had accompanied her appointment reappeared; they said she had become a Roman Catholic. Clergymen warned their flocks against subscribing money for the soldiers in the East "if it was to pass through Popish hands." Others said she had gone to the East to convert soldiers to High Church

views. Mrs. Herbert's assurance that Miss Nightingale was somewhat Low Church had no effect. For then the public criticised her not for her "Catholicism," but because she was one of England's detested non-conformists—a Unitarian.

Yet, despite the friction the Lady-in-Chief caused, she succeeded in keeping the Home Government behind her all during her stay at Scutari. "Reverend Brickbat" and Dr. Hall might challenge her status, but at each crisis the authorities at home dispatched orders placing her status beyond question. "Miss Nightingale is recognized by Her Majesty's Government as the General Superintendent of the female nursing establishment of the Military Hospitals of the Army." The Queen made repeated inquiries as to her welfare, writing a letter stating her concern for Miss Nightingale and the "poor, noble, wounded and sick men." The message was posted on the walls of the Hospital and did much to allay criticism.

When the War Department reimbursed her for the building she had constructed with her own money, "The Nightingale Power" was undeniable. Sidney Herbert, too, had only praise for her initiative. "This is not," he wrote, "a moment for stickling at forms, but for facilitating the rapid and easy transaction of business. There is much mischief done to the public service in the stickling for precedence."

Kinglake sums up her impact as he writes, "Among

the males at Scutari, was no one with resolute will . . . the will of the woman, Florence Nightingale, was stronger, and flew straighter to its end; what she sought fiercely was, not simply to fulfill codes of duty, but overcoming all obstacles, to save the prostrate soldiery; to turn into a well-ordered hospital the appalling hell of the vast barrack wards and corridors. Power passed to one who could wield it—the Lady-in-Chief.”

Lytton Strachey, in a similar vein, writes of our sometimes acrid angel: “It was not by gentle sweetness and womanly self-abnegation that she had brought order out of chaos in the Scutari Hospitals, that, from her own resources, she had clothed the British Army, that she had spread her dominion over the serried and reluctant powers of the official world; it was by strict method, by stern discipline, by rigid attention to detail, by ceaseless labor, by the fixed determination of an indomitable will.”

There is nothing irreverent in a realistic portrayal of the world’s “most noble woman.” The picture of the Angel of the Crimea, with her scrub brush and her charts and graphs is a more tangible idol for modern womanhood than Santa Filomena with her lily, palm and javelin.

Florence Nightingale was no plaster saint. A Lady with a Lamp of course; but behind that lamp was also a Lady with a Will.



#### ***IV. The Conquering Heroine Returns***

“THE NIGHTINGALE’S SONG to the sick soldiers” had been sung in a key that rang ’round the world. When an enamoured public discovered she was due home they planned her triumphal entry. “Couldn’t the three military bands be sent to the station to meet her—the whole regiments of the Coldstreams, the Grenadiers and the Fusiliers?”

But the Lady-in-Chief was determined to return to England as quietly as she had left. The British Government begged her to accept, as her own, a man-of-war, to see her safely home. She thanked the officials, but refused their offer. Closing her hospitals, with Aunt Mai by her side, she quietly sailed for France. As “Miss Smith” she stayed overnight in a humble Paris hotel and went to London the next day. Even her family did not know her exact schedule, though they had indications of her arrival. Florence’s “spoils of war” as Parthe, now Lady Verney, called them, had preceded her. They included William, a one-legged sailor boy, Peter, a Russian orphan, and a

big Crimean puppy, called "Rousch," given her by the soldiers.

Florence spent a night in London with sisters in a convent, and after her few hours' rest, took a morning train home. Walking to Lea Hurst from the little country station she entered the back door, closely veiled and dressed in black. The first person to greet her was her old butler. "Miss Florence" had come home.

Wrote Parthe, "A little tinkle of the small church bell on the hills and a thanksgiving prayer at the little chapel next day were all the innocent greetings."

But the appreciative people of England could not be so easily put off. Her grateful public might not be able to show its gratitude with bells and cannon, bonfires and processions, but they could and did come in droves to the palatial Nightingale home, hoping to catch a glimpse of her.

An old lady who lived near the park gate told one of Florence's biographers, "I remember the crowds as if it was yesterday. It took me all my time to answer them. Folks came in carriages and on foot, and there was titled people among them, and a lot of soldiers, some of them without arms and legs, who had been nursed by Miss Florence in the hospital, and I remember one man who had been shot through both eyes coming and asking to see Miss Florence. But not ten out of the hundreds who came got a

glimpse of her. If they wanted help about their pensions, they were told to put it down in writing, and Miss Florence's maid came with an answer. Of course, she was willing to help everybody, but it stood to reason she could not receive them all; why, the park wouldn't have held all the folks that came, and besides, the old Squire wouldn't have his daughter made a staring stock of."

England, which was to raise in the heart of London a great memorial to Florence Nightingale, could make no ostentatious gesture while she still lived. Florence refused to be lionized. When the people realized that she was determined to have no public demonstrations, they began to shower her with gifts. The Queen herself had sent one of the first tokens before Florence left the Crimea, a brooch called "The Nightingale Jewel."\* Designed by the Prince Consort, it consisted of a ruby red enamel cross on a white field, probably the origin of our own Red Cross emblem.

Parthe, knowing her sister's lack of interest in decorations, pleaded with her to wear the token to please the soldiers. "It will be such a pleasure to them to know that the Queen has done her best to do you honour."

The gifts came from all classes; from the workmen of Sheffield was sent a case of cutlery with each

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\*Drawings of the Nightingale Jewel can be found at the beginning of this chapter and on the title-page.

knife blade inscribed, "Presented to Florence Nightingale, 1857." The Sultan of Turkey expressed his gratitude with a magnificent diamond bracelet; friends and neighbors of Lea Hurst presented Florence with a beautiful pearl inlaid writing desk. After discovering that Miss Nightingale did most of her work reclining on a sofa, an upholsterer made a special reclining couch "as some slight token of the esteem she is held in by the working classes for her kindness to our soldiers, many of whom are related to my workmen, who would gladly work in her behalf without pay."

Printers illustrated broadsheets with rough woodcuts of *The Lady with the Lamp*. One humble printing office issued, "Price One Penny, the Only and Unabridged Edition of the Life of Miss Nightingale, detailing her Christian Heroic Deeds in the Land of Tumult and Death, which has made her name most deservedly Immortal, not only in England, but in all Civilized Parts of the World, winning the Prayers of the Soldiers, the Widows and the Orphans."

Praise resounded in the newspapers, from *Punch* and *Spectator* to the humblest village journal. Old soldiers wrote poetry about her. Sentimental songs appeared such as "Angels with Sweet, Approving Smiles," "The Shadow on the Pillow," "The Woman's Smile," "The Star of the East." Special notepaper appeared with Florence's picture or with lithograph-

ed views of "Lea Hurst, her Home." Since the Squire and Mrs. Nightingale were reticent about supplying portraits, likenesses were left to the imagination. China shops produced China figures, inscribed with her name and a picture of her. Lifeboats and emigrant ships were christened "The Florence Nightingale." Children, streets, and racehorses were named after her. Vegetarians and Spiritualists alike sought her endorsement. Mail came from all walks of life, as Lady Verney said, "in hailstorms . . . but she just passes on and does not heed it as it comes in every morning in its flood, papers, music, poetry, friends, letters, addresses." "The people love you," she told her sister, "with a sort of passionate tenderness that goes to my heart."

Florence had in the Crimea accepted gladly the supplies that had been sent her for the soldiers, but she wrote now as then, "My effigy and praises were less welcome . . . I do not affect indifference to real sympathy, but I have felt painfully, the more painfully since I have had time to hear of it, the *éclat* which has been given to this adventure."

The most acceptable testimonial was a carefully worked out plan of Sidney Herbert's to secure a fund to organize and promote nursing. A great public meeting was called, "To give expression to a general feeling that the services of Miss Nightingale in the hospitals of the East demand the grateful recognition of

the British people." According to the *Times*, it was the "most brilliant, enthusiastic and unanimous gathering ever held in London."

A "Nightingale Fund" was inaugurated at this meeting to enable Florence to establish "some form of 'An English Kaiserswerth'." Great fairs were promoted to raise money. The officers and men of nearly every regiment and of many vessels contributed a day's pay. A concert was given by Jenny Lind which netted £200. There were great sums from great names and small amounts from those in modest walks of life. All England responded to the cause.

The Conquering Heroine had returned. She was now looked upon as a saint. One old lady who came close to her begged, "Let me touch your shawl." Florence could now live on her laurels. England expected nothing more; her friends and family hoped for nothing more; her doctors demanded she do nothing more. She had devoted her life as truly as any soldier on the battlefield. Her people wanted only the chance to "touch the hem of her garment," the privilege of idolizing her. By all the laws of human nature, the worn-out Lady-in-Chief's work was over. But once again, Florence Nightingale refused to follow established patterns.



## ***V. Florence the Gadfly***

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE'S health had been seriously impaired by her work in the East. Her naturally delicate constitution had undergone a severe strain. She was never completely well again. It would seem that physical infirmity might make her conform to her role of an adored convalescent even if social pressure could not. But her dominant will was a startling contrast to her ailing body.

Florence Nightingale's work at Scutari was but an over-emphasized incident in her total career. She herself strongly felt it. Historians and biographers have paid much attention to her dramatic accomplishments in the year and eight months she spent in the East and have overlooked or minimized her half-century of reform in England. As Strachey concludes, "What she accomplished in these years of

unknown labour could, indeed, hardly have been more glorious than her Crimean triumphs; but it was certainly more important. The true history was far stranger even than the myth . . . her real life began at the very moment when, in the popular imagination, it had ended."

Florence, almost entirely bedridden, was to tax her powers to the utmost. Her outward appearance was deceptive. Dressed in a soft, black silk dress with a shawl over her feet and a transparent white net kerchief edged with real lace laid over her hair and tied under the chin, she epitomized fragile and dainty womanhood. But as Strachey writes, "She remained an invalid, but an invalid of a curious character, an invalid who was too weak to walk downstairs, and who worked far harder than most Cabinet Ministers." He pictures her lying upon her sofa, gasping for breath, but devouring Blue-books and dictating between palpitations. "For months at a stretch, she never left her bed. For years she was in daily expectation of death. But she would not rest. At this rate, the doctors assured her, even if she did not die, she would become an invalid for life. She could not help that; there was work to be done; and, as for the rest, very likely she might rest . . . when she had done it."

The more hours Florence spent in her sick-bed reliving the horrors of Scutari, the more intense was

her determination to tackle the source of evil in England. She contrasted conditions at home with those in the Crimea: "These people . . . have all fed their children on the fat of the land and dressed them in velvet and silk while we have been away. I have had to see my children dressed in a dirty blanket . . . and to see them fed on raw salt meat, and nine thousand of my children are lying, from causes which might have been prevented, in their forgotten graves. But I can never forget."

Neither time nor illness could dim for Florence "the causes which might have been prevented." She did not resort to neurotic reminiscing. The thought of the past but made her more insistent for present action. Florence Nightingale is above all else an example of real integration of personality; her emotions, her intellect and will were all in a happy state of balance. She felt, she reasoned, she acted. Her driving power, though seemingly dominant, was no greater than her sharp intelligence and her deep sympathies.

The mortality rate in the Crimea had been appalling; but the toll of lives in the barracks in peace time was a disgrace. Neither the Army Medical Department, the Medical Office nor the Military Hospital organization could be counted on to remedy the glaring evils of the system. Florence herself must take care of the health of the army. "I stand at the

altar of the murdered men and while I live, I fight their cause," she said, as three months after her return, broken in body but not in spirit, she began her work.

She organized her life well, closing her doors resolutely to many people, often including her parents and close friends who she felt pampered her. Strachey suggests that even her illness was a carefully planned excuse to weed inessentials out of her life.

Squire Nightingale paid all her bills and increased her allowance to £500 a year. Florence spoke gratefully to her mother of "Pop's liberality," which in addition to her own earnings through her books, allowed her to give full support to her "causes."

Florence referred to the house which her father leased for her as "a fashionable old maid's house in a fashionable quarter." But No. 10 South Street was to seem to many as important in the affairs of state in the 19th Century as the Kremlin or No. 10 Downing Street in the 20th. With the exception of brief visits and twice yearly drives in the park at rhododendron time, Florence spent 45 years at this address. At one period she took no holiday for ten years.

"No. 10 South Street" was to be the setting for a half-century clash between an invalid bent on reform and the great and mighty powers of state, equally determined to keep things as they were. The socially conscious Florence insisted that there should

be change in the laws, codes and methods of army hospitals; her organization-minded enemies, enmeshed in "the System," held out for the status quo. Florence was confronted by the hidebound Lord Panmure, aptly called by his friends, "The Bison." Behind him, writes Strachey, "There loomed . . . the whole phalanx of professional conservatism, the stubborn supporters of the out-of-date, the worshippers and the victims of War Office routine."

Their names were great ones; their titles were impressive; but they were no match for Florence. She had everything. The name of her crusading grandfather, William Smith, M. P., was now a venerable one; Squire Nightingale's wealth and status had allowed Florence to move from birth in the highest circles of society, taking Peers and Cabinet Ministers for granted.

It was no unknown fanatic that the standpatters confronted, but a nation's idol, a lady of rank, a woman whose executive genius had made world history.

Too wise to tackle her problems single-handed, Florence gathered around her a group of friends upon whom she could rely—her "cabinet." Dr. John Sutherland, whose sanitary engineering corps in Scutari had, according to Florence, "saved the British army," became her confidential secretary. More and more Florence was to fall into the habit of "saying

nothing, doing nothing, writing nothing” without first consulting him.

There was the poet Arthur Clough, a relative by marriage, eager to serve in the most menial ways; Clough bought Florence’s railroad tickets, saw her printers, corrected proof and posted her parcels. At a modest salary he became secretary of the Nightingale Fund. He had “studied and taught too much for a man’s own moral good,” he told Florence. He wanted to do “plain work.”

The devoted and indispensable Aunt Mai, who had “picked up” and gone with her to Scutari, still stood by her.

The most important member of Florence’s “cabinet” was Sidney Herbert, as eager now to support her English crusade as he had been to advance her work in the Crimea.

The story book writer might find in Sidney Herbert and Florence Nightingale all the qualifications for intrigue in affairs of the heart as well as state. Both were socially conscious, handsome, rich and talented, yet, according to Strachey, it was “one of the most extraordinary of friendships. It was the friendship of a man and woman intimately bound together by their devotion to a public cause; mutual affection, of course, played a part in it, but it was an incidental part; the whole soul of the relationship was a community of work. Perhaps out of England

such an intimacy could hardly have existed—an intimacy so utterly untinctured, not only by passion itself, but by suspicion of it. For years Sidney Herbert saw Miss Nightingale almost daily, for long hours together, corresponding with her incessantly when they were apart; and the tongue of scandal was silent; and one of the most devoted of her admirers was his wife."

The combination of Herbert's power as a successful politician with Florence's drive and astuteness was to make a powerful and fascinating team. Florence took full advantage of her companion's philanthropic nature. Herbert, a deeply religious man, once wrote, "I am more and more convinced every day that in politics, as in everything else, nothing can be right which is not in accordance with the spirit of the gospel." Florence was to insist that "the spirit of the gospel" be translated into cataclysmic changes in England's care of soldiers.

The profound influence she had upon her "Cabinet" members, great and small, is strikingly described by Strachey:

"Helpers and servers she must have . . . Devoted, indeed, these disciples were, in no ordinary sense of the term; for certainly she was no light task-mistress, and he who set out to be of use to Miss Nightingale was apt to find before he had gone very far, that he was in truth being made use of in good earnest, to

the very limits of his endurance and his capacity. Perhaps, even beyond these limits; why not? Was she asking of others more than she was giving herself? Let them look at her lying there pale and breathless on the couch; could it be said she spared herself? Why, then, should she spare others? And it was not for her own sake that she made these claims. For her own sake, indeed! No! They all knew it; it was for the sake of the work. And so the little band, bound body and soul, in their strange servitude, laboured on ungrudgingly."

Florence had marshalled her forces well; she was ready for her assault on the War Office.

First she went to see the Queen herself. She had several interviews both with Victoria and the Prince Consort. The latter wrote in his diary of her, "She puts before us all the defects of our present military hospital system and the reforms that are needed." The Queen's appreciative comment was, "I wish we had her at the War Office."

Florence Nightingale was not at the War Office because she was a woman; but she would mold its policies by directing the men in it.

She saw that a Royal Commission was appointed to report upon the health of the Army. Although she was not a member and could not give evidence or make a first-hand presentation of her vast knowledge and experience, she could by letter and consultation

advise and make suggestions. Like a hawk, she watched over the new body and guided it.

First she engineered the "personnel of the Commission," getting Herbert appointed Chairman and adeptly "packing" the rest of the Board so that only one member on it was opposed to her views. She scheduled meetings in her own room. The group did not move fast enough to suit her. It spent six months quibbling over what its powers should or should not be. The impatient invalid told the commission that unless there was quick action she would publish a report of her experiences in the Crimea.

Whether the philosophy of Karl Marx in 1848 had affected Florence or not, she was a revolutionist. Change there must be. If those in power did not see the light, she would agitate her public to make them see it. The memory of the Crimean War was still fresh in the minds of many mothers and relatives of the men who had died. If the people were told that it was governmental indifference and negligence that had killed British soldiers, there would be, in reality, a revolution.

She spent six months framing her threatened report, working with statisticians, sanitary engineers and experts, but doing the actual writing herself. Herbert wrote to her, "Why do you do all this with your own hands? I wish you could be turned into a cross-country squire like me for a few weeks."

These "Notes affecting the Health, Efficiency, and Hospital Administration of the British Army" filled 800 closely printed pages. The "amazing tour de force" constitutes, in the opinion of the experts in the field, "one of the most valuable contributions ever made to hospital organization and administration in times of war."

It was Florence's chief weapon to get what she wanted. As ably versed in political intrigue as in the skills of the operating room, she referred to her methods as "a petty kind of warfare, very unpleasant." She took advantage of the strong Lord Panmure's weakness, passing word around to her allies that "The Bison himself is bullyable, remember that." Lord Pan had to choose between an angry England or her demands. He knew that in Florence was a person who could twist the grateful masses of people around her finger, if she but raised it. What politician could hold out against the threats of "public opinion"?

Needless to say, the notes were not made public. A Royal Warrant was issued instructing the commission in wide and comprehensive terms. A report was prepared embodying almost word for word Florence's "notes." Florence and Herbert made plans for four sub-commissions to execute the details of the proposed changes. The Commission now had a basis for reform; but it refused to act. For six months Flor-

ence lashed out individually and collectively against the numbers: they were lazy; they were inefficient. Of Lord Pan she wrote, "We have seen terrible things in the last three years, but nothing to my mind is so terrible as Panmure's unmanly and stupid indifference." There was no excuse for his taking time off to shoot birds and stalk stag! When the "Bison" tried to excuse himself because of physical infirmity, Florence's tart remark was, "His gout was always handy."

Florence felt that Sidney Herbert went off to Ireland to fish when she needed him most. Dr. Sutherland was playing in his garden in Norwood. The severe task-mistress wrote sarcastically about his "digging ponds," insisting that he come back and tend to business at South Street.

During this period, Florence's health really gave way. In 1875 she herself expected to die. She wrote a letter to Herbert "to be sent when I am dead." The apathetic "Board" in England had put her on the brink no less surely than Crimean fever in Balaclava.

Dr. Sutherland told her she was thinking of everybody's "sanitary improvement" except her own.

A shakeup in the Government at last gave her a new lease on life. Herbert became Secretary of State for War. Florence was now to see the culmination of her plea for reform.

The four sub-commissioners set to work and the



Royal Commission's report became more than a Utopian blueprint. Sidney Herbert himself did some of the hardest work of his life, inspecting barracks and hospitals throughout the country.

Building were ventilated and warmed, drainage improved, gas and lights were installed. Plans were laid for proper education and recreational facilities for the soldiers. Florence refused to believe that the prevalent vices were inherent in men's natures. The authorities might sneer at the idea of her making the army a moral institution, but she writes, "I have never been able to join the popular cry about the recklessness, sensuality, and helplessness of the soldiers . . . Give them schools and lectures and they will come to them. Give them books and games and amusements and they will leave off drinking. Give them suffering and they will bear it. Give them work and they will do it. I had rather do with the Army generally than with any other class I have ever attempted to serve . . . If you know as I do, or once did, the difference between our soldiers cared for in body, mind and morale, and our soldiers uncared for—the last, 'hell's carnival,' . . . the first, the finest fellows of God's making; if you knew how troops immediately on landing are beset with invitations to bad of all kinds, you would hasten to supply them with invitations to, and means for good of all kinds; remembering that the soldier is of all men the man whose

life is made for him by the necessities of his Service. We may not hope to make 'saints' of all, but we can make men of them instead of brutes."

The results of Florence's plan, when given a fair trial, showed the wisdom of her words.

Under Florence's supervision, one of the sub-commissions succeeded in making "the British Army Statistics," according to Sir Edward Cook, "the best obtainable in Europe." The Royal Army Medical College was established, remaining as it stands today, next to the Tate Gallery, a fitting symbol of Florence's dreams. Even the Army Medical Department was re-organized.

But Florence was not satisfied. The changes at last springing up all over the country were not enough. The War Office was still as it had been; there must be a shake-up. "One fight more, the best and last," she told Sidney Herbert. The struggles she had had against cholera and typhus were mere skirmishes compared to the battles she now faced. She wanted to force certain phlegmatic individuals in the War Office to resign. Sidney must help her, but Herbert was suffering from a sharp attack of pleurisy; his doctor told him he must rest. Much to the horror of his prodding companion, he obeyed. According to Strachey, Florence was unrelenting as she exclaimed, "Beaten! Can't you see that you've simply thrown away the game? And with all the winning cards in

your hands! And so noble a game! Sidney Herbert beaten; it is a worse disgrace" . . . her full rage burst out at last, "a worse disgrace than the hospitals at Scutari."

Under the impetus of her scorn, the harassed Herbert went to work again. For days only constant gulps of brandy could keep him going. His fainting fits grew more frequent. He finally collapsed.

Whether Florence drove Herbert to his grave or not, Herbert's dying words well bespoke her influence upon him, "Poor Florence!" he murmured, "Poor Florence! . . . Our joint work . . . unfinished . . . tried to do . . ."

With equal persistency, Florence drove all her workers. She told Dr. Sutherland that he lacked method as he forgot, from time to time, where he had placed a particular Bluebook. There was much scolding if he delayed in attending to her long-winded business letters. Sometimes her devoted secretary responded to her complaints, sometimes he remained silent. Once he wrote, "Thanks for your parting kick." Then again, in a petulant mood, "If you knew what I have had to do, I am quite sure you would not have written about the proof as you have done." In one letter he merely signed his name under a drawing of a dry pump with a handle marked, "F.N." "Your pump is dry." Again, he referred to her as "Respected Enemy" or "Dear Epileptic Friend." Returning some

sheets of a book, he wrote, "I return the proof corrected, don't swear, but read the reasons on the accompanying paper."

Florence suffered great remorse as, one by one, death gradually took her faithful workers. Herbert's death, followed by that of Aunt Mai, threw the overwrought Florence into a state of agony. Her father's sister had been her life-long emotional support. Herbert was the captain of her ship "without whom she could never have done her work." When she first heard of his death, she wrote a friend, "He takes my life with him." But her will for progress was to overcome all temporary pangs of the heart. She published a pamphlet devoted to the memory of her "dear master." "He will be remembered chiefly," she wrote, "as the first War Minister who ever seriously set himself to the task of saving life." With statistics and with feeling she showed the sad state in which Herbert had found the army and how he had left it. She told what he had meant to do and what remained to be done. Death was no time for mourning; Herbert's plans must be carried out.

Florence's role as gadfly was to continue. She had already effectively stung the slow, immobile head of State into action. By threat, satire, exhortation, she had made a dent in the base of the evil she had lived through in the Crimea. She would, with or without helpers, continue her work.



## ***VI. An Insatiable Invalid***

**F**LORENCE, THE INVALID, was sometimes irate and always insatiable. Strachey writes, "A demon possessed her." She referred to herself as a vampire. Her energies and her scope of endeavor seemed unlimited.

June 24, 1860, was a memorable day for Florence and the future of nursing, when, after years of planning and promoting, the First Training School for Nurses was opened at old St. Thomas's Hospital near London Bridge. Florence's great objective, to make nursing a profession, was under way. Her School was to reform the hospitals, not only of England, but of the world. Similar institutions headed by her pupils sprang up all over the British Isles. Nightingale nurses were sent to the Colonies, to Germany, to Egypt and to America. To her effort the United States today owes much of its efficient organization for the care of sick and wounded soldiers. It was Florence Nightingale's advice which guided the activities of the famous Sanitary Commission during the Civil

War and the founding of the first training school in America. The New Emigrant Hospital and the Bellevue Hospital of the Massachusetts General had as their basis the rules she laid down at St. Thomas's.

To Florence Nightingale, too, must be given credit for our great International Red Cross. In 1863, a Swiss physician, M. Henri Dunant, citizen of Geneva, succeeded in drawing together an International Congress at Geneva for the relief of the wounded in battle. Dunant's plan was but the extension of the work Florence had already begun. What she had accomplished in the Crimea, the Red Cross Society was to do for the entire world. In 1867 the Conference of Red Cross Societies at Paris presented her with a gold medal. Dunant himself read a paper in London publicly stating that Miss Nightingale was the true instigator of the organization. His first words were, "Though I am known as the founder of the Red Cross and the originator of the Convention of Geneva, it is to an Englishwoman that all the honour of that Convention is due. What inspired me to go to Italy during the war of 1859 was the work of Miss Florence Nightingale in the Crimea."

In 1907 at an International Conference of Red Cross Societies in London, Queen Alexandra sent a message to "the pioneer of the first Red Cross movement, Miss Florence Nightingale, whose heroic efforts on behalf of suffering humanity will be recognized

and admired by all ages as long as the world shall last."

One of the greatest obstacles Florence had met in the Crimea and in India was the scarcity of properly trained nurses. Now she threw herself into the work of their education. The fact that she could not work at first hand with them in the hospital was most annoying to her. "It takes a great deal out of me," she wrote to a friend. "I have never been used to influencing people except by leading in work; and to have to influence them by talking and writing is hard."

From her sick-bed, however, she demanded moral and technical perfection. She kept in close contact with the sisters and nurses, writing vivid character sketches after each meeting. We read of "Mrs. T, flippant, pretension-y, veil down, ambitious, clever, not much feeling, talk-y, underbred, no religion!" Of another, Miss D, "As comfortable a jackass as ever I saw." Nurse E, "a most capable little woman, no education, but one can't find it in one's heart to regret it, she seems as good as can be." Of Miss X, "more cleverness than judgment, more activity than order, more hard sense than feeling, never any high view of her calling, always thinking more of appearance than of the truth, more petulance than vigor." One of her greatest joys was that of inspiring new workers. Many neophytes left her bedside thrilled

with the importance "the Chief" saw in them and their work.

It was a rare honor for any pupil to be invited to tea at No. 10 South Street. One young lady tells of starting her visit to "the Chief" dressed in her best. Another nurse rushed up to her exclaiming, "Miss Nightingale always gives a cake to the probationer who has tea with her, and the size of the cake varies according to the poverty of the nurse's dress." "So I hurried upstairs," the young lady said, "exchanged my best coat for one that had done country service for many years and came home from the party the proud possessor of a cake so large that it went the rounds of all the thirty-six probationers."

A delicate eater herself, Miss Nightingale insisted on the best for her guests, planning the menus and writing out the recipes herself. She insisted upon the nurses taking proper holidays, often defraying their expenses or having them stay with her at South Street or in the country. She sent those working in the hospital, books, flowers and fresh country eggs.

Equally generous was she in her practical advice. Eager to share her rich past with "her daughters," she told one candidate not to frighten the Hospital Board by starting suggestions at once "to reform the whole system"; to another, she spoke of the art of bedside manners. She urged candidates not to be so concerned about picking and choosing their places.

“Our brains are pretty nearly useless,” she said, “if we only think of what we should like ourselves; and not of what posts are wanting us, what our posts are wanting in us. What would you think of a soldier who, if he were to be put on duty in the honourable post of difficulty, as sentry may be, in the face of the enemy, were to answer to his commanding officer, ‘No, he had rather mount guard at barracks or study musketry.’ ”

She attacked the chief sin she felt among her nurses—that of self-sufficiency. Knowing that their Training Schools were the first of the kind, many of the nurses put on airs. They were often referred to as “the conceited Nightingales.” But Florence, in personal contact and in her talks, kept the idea of improvement constantly before them. “A woman who thinks in herself, ‘Now I am a full Nurse, a skilled Nurse; I have learnt all that there is to be learnt,’ take my word for it, she does not know what a Nurse is, and she will never know . . . To be a good nurse one must be an improving woman; for stagnant waters sooner or later, and stagnant air, as we know ourselves, always grow corrupt and unfit for use.”

She strongly objected to “Lady Nurses,” not blindly because they were gentlewomen, but because they had no training. In one of her papers read at a Congress on Woman’s Work in Chicago, she states that the greatest danger to nursing is “Fashion on the

one side, and consequent want of earnestness." Mere goodness in a woman was not enough. Women, however high their social rank, must be qualified for their work. In Florence Nightingale's booklet "Kaiserswerth," we have a stirring appeal to women to become nurses. "Nursing is an art," Florence insists, and "if it is to be made an art, requires as exclusive a devotion, as hard a preparation, as any sculptress, or painter's work; for what is the having to do with dead canvas or cold marble compared with having to do with the living body, the temple of God's spirit?"

Florence Nightingale goes down in history as the founder of modern nursing, Sir Thomas Cook states, "because she made public opinion perceive and act upon the perception that nursing was an art and must be raised to the status of a trained profession."

When the ailing reformer of No. 10 South Street felt that Army hospital reform at home was under-way, she insisted that action be taken concerning the British Army in India. Deeply moved by the Indian Mutiny of 1857, she wrote, "My mind is full of the dying Indian child, starved by hundred of thousands, from conditions which have been made for them, in this hideous Indian famine." She wrote to the Viceroy of India offering to go out at twenty-four hours' notice. Prevented from going, she became at home an Indian Reformer, an Indian-Agitator-at-large, working for the British and the Indians alike.

She pulled strings to get a man of her choice appointed as Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, who never left for India without a long session at No. 10 South Street. Together they worked and planned for better sanitation in India. A Sanitary Commission was appointed to do for the English troops in India what the four sub-commissioners were doing for those at home. Florence insisted that health missionaries be sent to the rural sections as well.

The obstacles confronting her were many and deep-rooted. There were the superstitions of Indians. Any pure water supply had to have the qualification of the sacred waters of the Ganges. It must be adjudged "theologically as well as physically safe." There were the barriers of custom and tradition. Typical of the Bombay-English government was the refusal to bury on one occasion thousands of men, camels and horses which were poisoning the air "because there was no precedent for it."

But to the Veteran of the Crimea "precedents," "boards" and ancient taboos meant nothing when human beings were dying. Midwifery was more important than outmoded philosophy.

The "Nightingale methods" were here as elsewhere effective. "Reports are not self-executive," Florence wrote, giving no one a minute's rest until there was action on them. Again, "By dint of remaining here for thirteen months, to dog the Minister I have got a

little department all to myself, called 'Of Public Health, Civil and Military' for India." At one delay Florence conducted a secret inquiry behind the officials' backs and then blasted those responsible. "God meant me for a reformer and I have turned out a detective," she writes. Her will was felt by all Indian officialdom, from the Governor General down to the local health officers.

She wrote directly to the Indian people, preparing a paper on "How People May Live and Not Die in India."

One of her articles was described as a "Shriek" by the officials, as they huddled together to see how they could counteract the impression she made. "We do not care for the people of India," Florence wrote. To her even sadder than the condition of the Indian peasant was the apathetic, conscienceless, caste-bound Englishman.

When some of her unladylike "observations" were suppressed, she had a new edition published separately in a little "banned" red book. One noted leader said that the sanitary crusade in India had been set in motion not by the Big Blue Book of statistics and compilations which nobody read, "but by a certain little red book of hers on India, which made some of us very savage at the time, but did us all immense good."

In the same manner did Florence improve the

workhouses. The "sick-poor" must have proper nursing; hospital conditions were as scandalous for them as those for the soldiers. The wards were insanitary and overcrowded. Most of the patients had bed sores. As at Scutari, the institutions lacked basins, towels, brushes, mops. Paupers were frequently in charge, many of whom could neither read nor write; addicts to drink, they robbed the sick of stimulants. They "poured out the medicine and judged according." The rule of one so-called nurse was "to give medicine three times a day to the very ill and once to the rather ill." Patients were killed by lack of judgment, sheer neglect and abuse.

Florence dramatized the evils she met. "I look upon the cubic space as the least of the evils," she wrote sarcastically, "indeed as rather a good, for it is a very good thing to suffocate the pauper sick out of their misery." Carlyle spoke of her "Notes on Pauperism" as the best, the most practical paper he had read on the question. Leading the Poor Law Reform, she bitterly attacked the *laissez-faire* school of economics, which she said means "Let bad alone."

Through her persistence the Act of 1867 passed and became the foundation for many improvements. Both houses of Parliament made public reference to her influence.

She looked into the faults of the Police System,

making friends with the policemen and sending them hot tea and cakes. She had definite ideas, too, for the treatment of criminals. After burglary had successfully been committed in her own home and the culprit had escaped she told the police, "Perhaps it was just as well that you didn't catch the man, for I'm afraid you don't do them much good when you lock them up."

At one period she worked for the protection of the aboriginal races. British Colonization had resulted in the gradual disappearance of some of them. Deeply ashamed for her country, which destroyed the races with which it came in contact, she probed at the causes. The liquor traffic must be suppressed; native children must not, in the name of decency, be given the wrong kind of clothing; open-air habits must be established; ill-managed colonial hospitals, bad drainage and impure water were blamed for the mortality.

She wrote incessantly on many subjects. Her unprinted Notes were copious. The list of her printed writings (published or privately circulated) fills twenty solid pages in fine print of the appendix of Sir Thomas Cook's biography. Her friends tried unsuccessfully to soft-pedal her outspoken articles and books; "She should submit them to Parthe for revision."

One of her confidants wrote of her style, "It is too jerky and impulsive, though I think it is logical and effective. You must avoid faults of taste and exag-

generation. The more moderate a statement is the stronger it is." Florence's reactions were usually heated. "Dr. Sutherland is so very etiquettish," she told herself. Once in self-justification, she wrote Herbert, "You may think I am not wise in being so angry. But I assure you, when I write civilly, I have a civil answer—and nothing is done; when I write furiously, I have a rude letter—and something is done (not even then always, but only then)." Then again, "What does the man mean by talking to me about style when I am thinking only of sufferings and oppression."

Her concern was in later life, as in girlhood, not for Literature but for Life. Despite her unceasing activity with her pen and her tongue the majority of the people associated her name with her work at Scutari.

One of her friends, however, wrote, "There are those who respect and love you, not for the halo of glory which surrounded your name in the Crimea, but for the patient toil which you have endured since, on behalf of everyone who is suffering or wretched."

The Lady-in-Chief had refused to go into real seclusion. Her influence grew greater with each passing year. She was an established consultant; great statesmen, renowned generals and admiring princesses begged to be allowed to "sit at her feet." From her Mayfair sickroom she gave eagerly-sought advice on

hospital construction, sanitation and international problems.

Refusing to live upon her laurels, she sought with each visitor, improvement. Typical of her nature is the reply she made to an over-appreciative guest; in the midst of effusive praise, Florence interrupted, "Talk to me of something which might be better."



## **VII. Florence the Feminist**

FLORENCE REBELLED AS strongly against the current ideal of wasp-waisted and mentally corsetted womanhood as she did against the neglect of her wounded soldiers. Reform was needed not only in the hospital and in the army, in India and on the continent, but also in the status of woman. The Woman's Rights movement had already been crystallized by Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1799. Florence, by thought, action and example was to continue the revolt.

In her rebellious girlhood she had been nauseated by the conventional books for ladies. In 1846 she wrote many tart comments in the margin of a book called *Passages from the Life of a Daughter at Home*, a work in which the author urged women dissatisfied with home life to submit graciously.

She felt early the impositions made upon women. Resenting the fact that she was expected to spend her time being nice to all the house guests, she writes, "How little women's occupations are respected, when

people can think that a woman has time to spin out long theories with every young fool who visits at her house." After visiting Oxford she wrote in her diary, "I saunter about the church-yards and gardens by myself before breakfast and wish I were a college man."

When John Stuart Mill wrote asking her to join the National Society for Women's Suffrage, her reply was "That woman should have the suffrage, I think no one can be more deeply convinced than I. It is so important for a woman to be a 'person' as you say." The next year she joined the Society. In 1871 she allowed her name to be placed on the General Committee and became an annual subscriber to its funds. Among her writings is one entitled "Opinions on Woman Suffrage."

It was the conventions of the time regarding woman's sphere which prevented her marrying. In 1850 she writes "I had three paths among which to choose. I might have been a literary woman, or a married woman, or a hospital sister."

At the time of her training in Kaiserswerth she considered marriage very seriously. She felt a severe conflict between her life's purpose and a certain young man. All the pressures were against her work and for a "brilliant match." She was 28 and "getting on" her Mother and Parthe constantly reminded her. More important, Florence loved the man. But her keen powers of analysis applied to "*affaires de coeur*"

as well as to those of state. She weighed the pros and cons; "I have an intellectual nature which requires satisfaction and that would find it in him. I have a passional nature which requires satisfaction and that would find it in him. I have a moral, an active nature which requires satisfaction, and that would not find it in his life. Sometimes I think that I will satisfy my passional nature at all events . . ."

She realized all too well that a Victorian Union would mean only engulfment in domesticity and the parlor graces. Marriage would merely be the exchange of the bonds of her family for those of a husband. Her free spirit would have none of it. She writes, "I could be satisfied to spend a life with him continuing our different powers in some great object. I could not satisfy this nature by spending a life with him in making society and arranging domestic things . . ." Marriage she felt should be "an opportunity for two people to be united together in some true purpose for mankind and God."

As for children, Florence once said that she found it better for herself to take care of the children of the world than to bring in more.

She believed in a wider sphere of service than the home. "A profession, a trade, a necessary occupation, something to fill and employ all my faculties, I have always felt essential to me, I have always longed for." She wished for it in others as well.

With terrific invective she comments upon the position of women in the upper classes. In 100 pages of close print, with the spirit of an Ibsen, Florence blasts the current conception of marriage and home. The subjective motivation back of her outburst is apparent.

She rebelled against the life of luxury to which she had been born and which had almost stifled her powers. Even when her mother was 78 years of age, Florence remained critical of her and considered her habits self-indulgent. What was to Parthe and her mother indispensable was to Florence impedimenta.

"Surely," Florence writes, "Woman should bring the best she has, whatever that is, to the work of God's world, without attending to either of these cries. For what are they, but listening to the 'what people will say' opinion, the voices from without? No one has ever done anything great or useful by listening to the voices from without. You want to do the thing that is good, whether people call it 'suitable for a woman' or not."

An analysis of Florence Nightingale's character seems to substantiate modern scientific research which concludes that there is no "female" or "male" character. At every stage of her life, from rebellious girlhood to old age, Florence exerted the so-called masculine traits of aggressiveness and initiative. The softer virtues, the so-called feminine graces, were

there, but they were subordinate to the "harder" ones.

One of the most interesting notes on the psychology of the sexes is the relationship of Florence and Sidney Herbert. As Strachey writes, "The man who acts, decides, and achieves; the woman who encourages, applauds, and from a distance inspires; the combination is common enough; but Miss Nightingale was neither an Aspasia nor an Egaria. In her case it is almost true to say that the roles were reversed; the qualities of pliancy and sympathy fell to the man, those of command and initiative to the woman. There was one thing only which Miss Nightingale lacked in her equipment for public life; she had not, she never could have, the public power and authority which belong to the successful politician. That power and authority Sidney Herbert possessed; the fact was obvious, and the conclusion no less so; it was through the man that the woman must work her will. She took hold of him, taught him, shaped him, absorbed him, dominated him through and through. He did not resist—he did not wish to resist; his natural inclination lay along the same path as hers; only that terrific personality swept him forward at her own fierce pace and with her own relentless stride." Herbert met the public and was, to all appearances, in the foreground; but it was the "gentle" Florence who compelled him to act. A more persistent power behind the throne never existed. According to Parthe she

was "like a man," divest of "female" traits. Florence herself made such analysis. "Sidney Herbert and I," she writes, "were together exactly like two men—exactly like him and Gladstone."

Florence asked no special favors or consideration because she was a woman. She never used her "condition," shaky as it usually was, as an excuse for inaction. "I attribute my success to this," she once wrote, "I never gave or took an excuse." She had ample opportunity to use woman's prerogative of changing her mind. Easily could she have retreated from the horrors she met at Scutari; she could have used wounded pride and the harsh treatment of the officials as excuses. As far as we know, such an idea never entered her mind. Leaving Scutari for the rigors of a Crimean winter, she writes, "I am ready to stand out the War with any man." Again addressing a discontented nurse, "Do you think I should have succeeded in doing anything if I had kicked and resisted and resented? Is it our Master's command? Is it even common sense? I have been even shut out of hospitals . . . obliged to stand outside the door in the snow till night . . . been refused rations for as much as ten days at a time. And I have been as good friends the day after with the officials who did these things—have resolutely ignored these things *for the sake of the work*. What was I to my Master's work?"

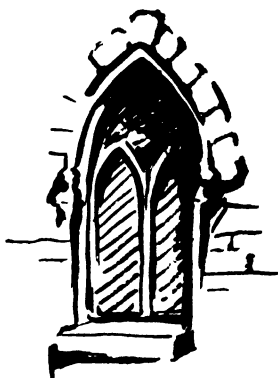
By example as well as words, Florence proved that

a person need not be barred from certain paths of life because she is a woman.

Florence Nightingale's part in the feminist movement has too long been minimized. Even Parthe wrote to a friend that "What Florence has done towards raising the standards of women's capabilities and work is most important."

Lord Stanley, an active public figure during her day, well recognized her contribution in this field when he wrote, "It is not easy anywhere, especially in England, to set about doing what no one has done before . . . Mark what, by breaking through customs and prejudices, Miss Nightingale has effected for her sex. She has opened to them a new profession, a new sphere of usefulness. I do not suppose that, in undertaking her mission, she thought much of the effect which it might have on the social position of women. Yet probably no one of those who made that question a special study has done half so much as she toward its settlement."

Sir Edward Cook voiced popular sentiment in the 19th century when he wrote, "A great commander was lost to her country when Florence Nightingale was born a woman." But the facts speak to the contrary. The truth is that Florence Nightingale was no "lost commander"; she was a veritable Napoleon who happened to be born a woman.



### ***VIII. Florence the Religious Liberal***

**F**LORENCE CHALLENGED orthodox attitudes in the field of religion. She disliked the emphasis upon man's innate depravity. Man was not a "miserable sinner"; he was a "potential divinity." A "Garibaldian" in politics, Florence was a liberal in religion.

Most biographers go to great lengths to show Miss Nightingale's affiliations with the Church of England. At certain periods of her life when no Unitarian Church was conveniently located she is known to have attended the Anglican Church and even to have partaken of communion. But she was, more significantly, the daughter of Unitarian parents brought up in a home frequently visited by great religious liberals of the day. During the formative years of her life, she accompanied her father to Unitarian services in the little chapel that existed at Lea. Later she worshipped

as often as her health permitted at Essex Street Chapel, the first Unitarian church in Great Britain. Her interests in the cause of religious liberalism continued to the end of her life. Her proselytizing zeal was apparent at 80 years of age when she sent two ladies to make purchases at a bazaar being held to raise funds for new Unitarian chapels. Her whole life with its passionate devotion to social reform stands as the very embodiment of Unitarian ideals transformed into action.

Seemingly engrossed in charts, hospital plans and medical statistics, she found time to publish many religious works upon such subjects as "Belief in God," "The Plan of Creation," "The Origin of Evil" and "The Nature of Morality." In a book dedicated to the working men she arrived at the conclusion, shocking to society, that "the most thinking and conscientious of the artisans have no religion at all . . . all the moral and intellectual among them seem going over to Atheism!"

She heralded the study of comparative religions, showing in one work how different ages have meant different things by God; the Christian idea was but one of many; there was the conception of the Hindu, the Greek and the Israelite as well.

Florence was a contemplative as well as an active saint. She records many mystical experiences from youth on, in which she threw her heart, mind and soul

into the world about her. Not only the beauty of the Sistine Chapel overwhelmed her. Extreme poverty and ugliness had a similar effect. In the slums of London she writes, "You cannot get out of a carriage at a party without seeing what is in the faces making the lanes on either side, and without feeling tempted to rush back and say, "Those are my brothers and sisters." The words brother and sister connoted more to Florence than blood relationships. She had little class or family consciousness; she identified herself with all.

Florence the mystic was the motivator of Florence the woman of action. It was the "inner light", "the still small voice" from within which "compelled" her to put into action her many and varied ideals. Religion in her own terms was "to do God's work in the world." The service of God meant to her the service of Man. The brotherhood of man was to her not an ideal but a reality. Mankind was one whether its components were aborigines, members of the Royal family, impoverished Indians or the inmates of a poor house. Sectarianism was not in Florence's make-up and she tried all through her life to abolish it in others. When first starting her nursing career at Harley Street, she fought her committee when it refused to let her take in Catholic patients. Telling a friend of a similar example of bigotry, she writes, "I wished them good morning, unless I might take in Jews and

their rabbis. So now it is settled and in print that we are to take in all denominations whatever." She did favor certain Catholics at one period of her life but not for their religious theology; it was their deeds which appealed to her. "The Catholic orders," she wrote, "offered me work, training for that work, sympathy and help in it, such as I had in vain sought in the Church of England . . ." "That body had," according to Florence, "told me to go back and do crocheting in my mother's drawing room; or if I were tired of that, to marry and look well at the head of my husband's table."

Though accused of showing favoritism toward this sect or that, Florence had but one test for a woman's religion, "Was she a good woman and did she know her business?"

Parthe well understood her sister when she wrote of her selections of nurses, "Flo desired to include all shades of opinions to prove that all might work in a common brotherhood of love to God and man."

One good Irish clergyman, on being asked by his congregation to what sect Miss Nightingale belonged aptly replied, "She belongs to a sect, which, unfortunately, is a very rare one; the sect of the Good Samaritan."

Florence Nightingale's religious spirit was more pioneering than pious; although she received world-wide acclaim and distinguished honors during her

lifetime, she suffered too, the wrath of convention-bound society. As one ahead of her time, she knew criticism as well as adulation.

With great fervor did she quote from John Stuart Mill: "I have no patience with people who will not publish because they think that the world is not ripe enough for their ideas; that is only conceit or cowardice. If anybody has thought out anything which he conceives to be truth, in Heaven's name let him say it."

Florence did not wait until "the time was ripe" to project her ideas on sanitation, the status of women, or religion.

One of her friends who shared her plans for a better India was called a "splendid madman." "And so he is," was Florence's quick retort, "but all these must be splendid madmen who initiate any great thing, any great work."

When at the end of her life she saw some of her own nursing methods being discarded as antiquated, she felt not resentful but hopeful for progress in her profession.

"What greater reward can a good worker desire than that the next generation should forget him, regarding as an obsolete truism, work which his own generation called a visionary fanaticism?"

These words show the unselfishness of that truly progressive spirit, Florence Nightingale.













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